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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

IMMIGRANT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING:

THE LEARNER'S POINT OF VIEW

BY

RAE LABERGE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

IN

ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT, CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1992

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Immigrant Second Language Learning: The Learner's Point of View*, submitted by Rae Laberge in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

C. A. Urion

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Date Feb 10, 1992

ABSTRACT

Analysis of a series of ethnographic interviews with four adult students in an English as a second language classroom revealed that adult learners expressed frustration with the nature and operation of the programmes that were in place. The students made suggestions and proposals for change. The literature that reports research about the characteristics of adult learners, and specifically about immigrant adult second-language learners, is clear that a change from rigid programming is needed, yet rigid programmes continue to exist. A lack of time and a lack of incentive to change, combined with limited options for process in learning, promise to perpetuate a cycle of learner dissatisfaction. Creative solutions in programming call for greater involvement by the learner, and for taking account of the learner's point of view. This study points to the need for further research about the causes of discomfort for adult immigrant second language learners.

PREFACE

Learning about the reality of being an immigrant second language learner has implications for how educational programmes can be changed. Although this study focuses on students, it is necessary to look beyond the classroom into other social and educational contexts which provide answers. A review of the literature demonstrated an awareness of the difficulties that English-second-language (ESL) students face, and uncovered a need to research explanations.

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I would like to express my appreciation to the Winnifred Stewart Campus of Alberta Vocational College, in Edmonton, for allowing me to use their institution as the centre for the interviews. Their action represents a way of including the learner in the process of education, and demonstrates an interest in discovering the problems and preoccupations that their learners face.

I have used pseudonyms to identify the participants. The privilege of knowing the participants in this study has been incomparable. I have never met more distinguished and unique personalities. What is more, they met me with open arms, sincerely enjoying the time the spent together. They talked and shared with an ease and graciousness that transcended the barrier of language. They had confidence that they would learn to communicate in their new world.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

One of the two advanced English-as-a-second-language classes at Alberta Vocational College in the summer of 1990 was comprised of immigrants from Poland, Mexico, Ethiopia, China and Iran. Twelve of the sixteen students were from Poland. I asked for four volunteers to participate in an interview study on second language use and immediately had four Polish volunteers. I wanted to find out, from their point of view, what the problems and issues were in learning a second language.

One method of finding out their perspective was to study the meanings they gave to the English terms which they used to describe themselves and the process of language acquisition during this stage of their learning English as a second language. A significant part of this study is thus the description of the process of questioning, making interview summaries and observational notes, and discussing how this process speaks back to the general research question. The foundation of the description is to find out what semantic domains these language learners implicitly described in the process of interview. The two principle themes which were indicated in the process of interview and analysis were (a) the themes of mixed feelings, such as being pushed and pulled, or having anxiety, uncertainty, and concern for quality of life; and (b) the theme that included environmental factors, such as heightened social and economic pressures as a result of membership in a subordinate group.

The goal of the work is to describe, in their terms, the immigrant experience in language learning. The discussion rests on the reports of the four volunteers. I stated no initial hypotheses because I did not know what their perspectives might be and did not want to limit the scope as they defined what was significant to them about the experience of language learning.

There is no claim to represent all adult second language learners. Rather, it is proposed that there is something of value in providing access to the accounts of these four people, as they attempt to learn a second language. The research strategy is to describe the experience of these four people, as they recount it, and to suggest axes on which their experiences, as they recount them, may be generalized and summarized. This kind of description is valuable as it illustrates this aspect of human experience, and it is valuable as it allows for comparative study with other adult second-language learners in similar situations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover how a small group of adult immigrants describe what they cope with during the process of learning a new language.

Problem Statement

What concerns and distractions, adjustments and priorities do adult immigrants have which are additional to, and influence, language learning in the classroom?

There is an assumption here about the four as a group, and as representative of a group. The first is that where there are common challenges there will be common demands upon the learner. Therefore, the adult students of the advanced level of an English as a second language programme will have some characteristics in common. They will have had some shared experiences and some common needs. They can be considered to have their own (albeit temporary) culture, or unique group identity.

Terminology

The research methodology used in this study has been derived from the field of anthropological linguistics, and the terminology is specific to the tradition. Spradley (1979, 1980) has articulated this tradition as a specific "developmental research sequence" for collecting interview data and confirming initial analyses through subsequent interview. The procedure involves ethnographic interview, classification of

terms in specific "semantic domain," by relating "cover terms" and "included terms." More precise definition of terminology follow.

Ethnography. The morpheme "ethno" refers to "folk," while the morpheme "graph[y]" implies written description. Thus an ethnography is "any full or partial description of a group. Ethnography is the study of another culture and therefore the study of the ethnocentrism of natives" (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p. 24). An ethnography allows reporting from another's point of view. The ethnographer must observe, and must ask the people what they think they are doing:

> [A]n ethnography describes a social group—usually small (less than 15)...ethnography applies to all humans. Ethnographic methodology must be general enough to apply equally to all cultures. It must work that way because we are all natives of at least one, and usually more than one, human culture (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987, p. 45).

Every group member learns to share a way of making sense out of his or her world. Ethnography is a tool which allows us to understand the separate realities of others (Spradley, 1980).

Domain. "Domains are categories of meaning [and] a category is an array of different objects that are treated as if they were equivalent" (Spradley, 1980, p. 88). Elements which make up domains are called "included terms." Each included term has a "semantic" relationship with the "cover term," as a member of a class of included terms that constitute the domain.

Cover term. A cover term is the name given to a "domain" (Spradley, 1980).

Included terms. "Included terms are the names for all the smaller categories inside the domain" (Spradley, 1980, p. 89). For example, in this study it was found that "comfort," "family," and "stability of life" were terms that were included in the cover term of "quality of life."

Semantics. Semantics is the relationship between words and represents the value placed on words. The semantic relationship between the above included terms and their cover term might be represented as in Figure 1.

comfort family stability ... etc.	is part of	QUALITY OF LIFE
↑ *included terms* ↑	↑ *semantic relationship* ↑	↑ *cover term* ↑

Figure 1. Example of Relationship Between Included Terms and Cover Term *Quality of Life*

Literature Review

Although the experience of learning English is in many ways synonymous with learning Canadian ways of life, cultural barriers to learning English are not well understood, nor have they been fully documented. What is understood of learner needs can be placed in juxtaposition to approaches in langauge study. The literature amounts to a discussion of alternatives, and because so little is known about the needs of second language learners, the strongest implication in the literature is a call for research.

Adult Education and the Adult Learner

The term "adult education" refers to "practically all experiences of mature men and women by which they acquire new knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, interests, or values" (Knowles, 1980, p. 25). It describes a process of lifelong learning and assumes that the acquiring of knowledge and skills is not restricted to the experiences of youth. Within this definition is an implication that adults are unlike children due to their manifold past experiences and because of their current responsibilities. Adult education is as plausible on the work site as at colleges, universities, or community colleges. It is "any planned and organized activity ... under the immediate and continuing supervision of an instructional agent who manages the conditions of the learning objective" (McGechaen & Persons, 1986, p. 9).

"Adult learners" are those who see themselves as being responsible for their own lives (Knowles, 1980). Educational institutions recognize adults as being "over

eighteen years of age and hav[ing] assumed responsibility for themselves" (McGechaen & Persons, 1986, p. 9). Knowles (1980) observes that those who have taken responsibility in other areas of their lives resent being given little responsibility.

Adults are volunteers to learning and are therefore discriminating learners. They must feel that their interests and needs are being met before new information can be effectively transmitted. Maslow (1970) has identified and described a "hierarchy of human needs" based on studies of American men. These include physiological or survival needs, safety needs, love, affection, and belongingness needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization. Adult education may contribute to the fulfilling of needs for survival, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization.

Experiences in Second Language Learning

Experiences in learning English as a second language represent part of "a priceless repository of material for research on the study of language acquisition, acculturation, and change" (Kachru, 1983, p. 329). As the immigrant is struck with the differences between the "old world" and the "new", he or she is constantly comparing and reflecting upon the two (Disman, 1982). A study specific to Polish immigrants demonstrated that "they tend to perceive themselves as relatively Polish, but with many characteristics that make them distinctive from both Poles in Poland and Canadians" (Gardner, Przedzielewski, & Lysynchuk, 1990, p. 1).

An immigrant becomes responsible for a "systematic inquiry into the new culture . . . the moment he or she arrives" (Disman, 1982, p. 72). With time comes understanding of the new language and familiarity with the new culture. However, so little is known of this, that Nash, Cason, Rhum, McGrail, & Gomez-Sanford (1989) can assert that many of the barriers ESL learners face in basic issues of survival are undocumented.

The culture shock of immigration is intimately accompanied by the need to learn a new language (Disman, 1982; Kessler, Heflin, & Fasano, 1983; McGroarty, 1989). It appears that the more the learner identifies with the new community, the better his or her language skills will be (Schumann, 1978). Therefore, understanding how an

immigrant's psychosocial state impacts on language learning is crucial (Kessler et al., 1983).

Approaches to Language Study

There is a dearth of information on the influence of the learner's orientation to language learning (Omaggio, 1986). Yet immigrants themselves say that the most important contribution that others can make to their lives is to try to understand what being an immigrant is really like (Charon, 1988; Laurin, 1991; Loveday, 1982). It is therefore essential that second language teachers know what their students are experiencing in order to bridge discontinuities (Bransford, Stein, & Sheldon, 1984; Park, Wong, Takada, Wong, & Kim, 1984).

Programmes ideally would reflect learner needs and be flexible enough to address changes as they occur. However, in reality, when "the students don't fit the programmes" (Derwing & Ho, 1990, p. 7), researchers ask whether the problem lies with the aptitude or attitude of the learner (Gillette, 1987). It is surprising how rarely the programme or process is questioned.

There is an absence of tools for calculating learner priorities and for addressing these in programme development (Oullette, 1990). Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that adults and children alike will make more positive contributions to their learning environment where their input is valued, rather than where they feel their interests are of no consequence due to predetermined standards (Fisher & Terry, 1982). Where there is deeply personal content in language use, there is extensive language development (Kessler et al., 1983).

Richards and Rogers (1986) found that "(m)ost language teaching programs operate from a basis of informed eclecticism" (p. 158) in terms of available methods. However, Derwing and Ho (1990) have concluded that it is more expedient for institutions offering English as a second language programmes to opt for "linear, lockstep, education," where programme funding and teacher salaries are based on temporary contracts (p. 6). Teachers tend to transfer information to students as if classes were made up of homogeneous groups of learners because, following the

present curricula, it would mean sacrificing a great deal of personal time to develop individualized programmes (Derwing & Ho, 1990).

Recommendations from the Literature

Halliday (1978) has determined that language is learned best where there are meaningful exchanges with other people who are significant to the learner. Language cannot be well learned in the isolation of a language programme.[1] The language we use becomes an expression of the culture we participate in and represents a way of thinking (Spradley, 1980).

A rigid language programme serves to insulate the teacher from the realities of how language is used in the real world. Students learn to speak from being allowed to risk and practice in an educational environment (Froese, 1990). If they are not allowed pertinent practice, they are cheated out of those experiences which could prepare them for being accepted into career and community (Kullman, 1984). They feel at a loss and isolate themselves from the world in which they live (Mickelson, 1978).

Access to suitable education which recognizes the specific needs of second language learners and which covers "material related to the students' academic backgrounds" (Derwing & Ho, 1990, p. 5) is essential. Each learner will need specific competency in his or her career. Each adult will have very individual needs for language use based upon life experiences and/or choice of profession (Shuell, 1986). Teachers are not predisposed to knowing what the learner needs.[2]

---

[1]Werner (1969) states that Berlitz language learners suffer from a sense of isolation: "[T]he sense of total isolation Berlitz students feel and under which 30 per cent break down when exposed to the total immersion method of language learning," (p.5.33).

[2]For example, from Lerner (1990): "[I]n relationships between dominant and subordinate groups, the subordinate group members always possess a far greater understanding of dominant group members and their culture than vice versa" (p. 6).

The Need for Models, Not Materials

"[S]econd-language researchers and practitioners should look beyond the acquisition of forms and functions to gain deeper insights into the process of acquiring a second language," (Kessler et al., 1983, p. 21).

The need for models and not materials in adult education is becoming increasingly evident. In order to include the body of experiential knowledge and educational background and respect the adult learner's immediate and long-term goals for language training, models which allow flexibility in methods and materials are essential (Bassano, 1983). The amount and significance of what is studied must be considered within the student's time frame (Ouellette, 1990). What, in other words, does the student wish to place priority on in language learning? Could he or she be given that choice?

Lescarbeau, Payette, and St. Arneault (1990), of social psychology, developed a method of cooperation which can be used with individuals, groups, and between groups. Throughout this process the people involved recognize the abilities of <u>all</u> who are implicated. There must be a sharing of responsibilities and power. Tasks are given to people and these tasks are achieved. An individual is responsible for overseeing the completion of the tasks, and there are on-going evaluations by the group or steering committee. Perceived needs may change. The process takes this into account by encouraging open dialogue and reflecting the needs of the learner.

Nadler (1977) emphasizes that handing over data to the learner is like handing over the source of power. It allows the learner to react to and process the data. Participation in the process provides feedback to the group in the form of summaries which ultimately help to determine goals. In other words, the people who are living the experience have access to resources to achieve goals. They are being implicated in the change process. This, in turn, stimulates members to participate in the process of change.

Creative Solutions

Because we do not entirely understand how skills and strategies are transferred from one language to another, it is important for the participants to become involved in the design of their language learning programme (Werner, 1969). Cummins (1986) speaks to the importance of empowering minority students:

> Students who are empowered by their school experiences develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically. They participate competently in instruction as a result of having developed a confident cultural identity as well as appropriate school-based knowledge and interactional structures. (Cummins, 1986, p. 23)

In recent months the "Education Permanente", of the Faculté St.-Jean at the University of Alberta, has developed a process for the redefinition of needs in literacy. A steering committee which includes representative learners, teachers, and members from the community at large, define who the learner is and how he or she functions in society. It is important that this definition not come from government and that it also be determined "for a specific point in time" (Laberge, 1991).

The learner participates at every stage of the learning process; that is, the programme development, implementation, and on-going evaluation and re-orientation where necessary.

> [Q]ue l'apprenant et le formateur deviennent de plus en plus conscients du fait que c'est l'apprenant qui est le premier responsable de son apprentissage. Cet énoncé a des répercussions sur l'ensemble du projet de formation qui nécessite la participation active des apprenants dans toutes les étapes de leur apprentissage. (Ouellette, 1990, p.76)

Where there is friction, there must be regrouping to dialogue. When the dynamic becomes rutted in old patterns of communication where learners receive advice and not support, dialogue opens up to reflect the perceptions of both learners and teachers. The importance of dialogue is to encourage the learner to let his or her needs be known. Lescarbeau et al. (1990) acknowledge that for many participants in such a process it is the first time that they have had a sense of power over what they learn.

It is essential that the learner be given the positive experience of participating in the reconstruction process. Projected results of such an orientation in immigrant second language learning would be a better general profile of the people involved (Nash et al., 1989). In fact, becoming involved in the process is powerful motivation to use the second language in highly complex and personal ways (Kessler et al., 1983). It is anticipated that the learners would realize a transference of skills from this to other areas requiring responsibility in the community, in career growth, etc. (Laberge, 1991).

Call For Research

Other research generally supports gaining a greater understanding of the learner's point of view. With the advent of participatory research, learner input has been actively pursued in the structuring, implementation and even evaluation of programmes for learning (Laberge, 1991; Nash et al., 1989). However, sources of friction and discontent with programmes have not been fully researched.

Institutions have, until now, either prescribed instruction or taken enormous time to hear participants, instructors, tutors, volunteers, etc. without being prepared for how aspects of family, career, community or personality will create obstacles for the learner. A better understanding of problems to begin with would provide more effective use of time in finding solutions.

Perhaps one of the reasons why second language students have not been involved in research is the difficulty of their being completely understood. The process of dialogue may be inhibiting to both learner and investigator. Ethnography in second language learning settings provides a structure for identification of problem areas. Identification of problem sources and statistical analysis of the likelihood that such problems will occur in any given group is needed.

Documentation of the learner's point of view is also being made available by immigrants themselves as they reflect upon their experiences (Chao, 1947; Charon, 1988, 1989; Disman, 1982). This information often calls for strong teacher intervention in error correction, definite programming for study and examination and routine

practice for speech training. While these recommendations may seem to support rigid programmes, they must be recognized as actually providing another design for identification of learner needs.

Initial instruction has a significant impact on consequent second language development (Kessler et al., 1983). It is crucial that many problems be anticipated and that the learner's voice be heard so that his or her needs can be addressed in the most effective ways possible.

Summary

Ethnography in English as a Second Language provides a wealth of information on the second language learner's point of view. Much conflict in education is a result of not accessing learner input and not knowing how learner needs differ from predetermined programmes.

It may be necessary to probe other disciplines, such as ethnography and social psychology, to find solutions in adult education. Branching out gives new examples of resolution to universal problems such as how to anticipate and meet the needs of those involved.

Research on how information can be made more accessible to the programming group is presently being made available. Although participatory programming is becoming more popular, there is a need for further research into the sources of obstacles which learners face. Much time and effort could be saved if problem areas were identified before group interaction began.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The ethnographic interview is a process of understanding and its write-up is an effective way of communicating information to another person. The ethnographic researcher takes notes from the time before understanding the situation under study until after the interviews are complete. A good record of the research process is essential in order to be able to transmit the information to someone who does not know anything about the area of study because once the researcher understands, it is too late to begin taking notes. It is impossible after the point of understanding to remember what it was like not to know.

James P. Spradley (1979) has developed a method for determining cultural identification through ethnographic interview. Spradley's interview process organizes linguistic information to discover the world view of a particular group. The interview data of this study have been organized to create a new understanding of the challenges immigrants face in learning a new language and culture.

The method involved asking various questions of participants and recording the interviews on audio tape. I also took observational notes. Every day I brought the tapes home, put them in a dictaphone and transposed them to a word processor. The preliminary analysis consisted of a second look at the current and previous interviews to see where included terms fit into the rest of the data, and to create a growing list of possible domains. Where I could not find the semantic relationship or where I needed to compare my idea with the participant's, I wrote out a question using the term and its possible meaning and then let the participant confirm or correct the definition at our next meeting.

The methodology is valuable in that it allows the necessary flexibility to hear and study another's point of view. Since the researcher is only listening and relaying the same information or asking for a more extensive description from the learner, there is

no sense of challenge or denial of ideas. This tone of acceptance and encouragement enlists the total support of the learners as the authorized informants of the culture under study. The participants become collaborators in the study.

Setting and Participants

The site for the interviews was the Winnifred Stewart Campus of Edmonton's Alberta Vocational College. Winnifred Stewart is a large facility with two floors of classrooms, a library, language laboratory, gymnasium, and a stage. The building is close to a shopping centre with banks, a grocery store, clothing shops, and restaurants. Students often ate out of doors at lunchtime in a nearby park, where there were a lawn to sit on and picnic tables.

Four students volunteered to take part in this study after I made an initial presentation to their advanced English as a second language class. There were two men and two women. All of them were professionals from Poland. While in Poland, one man had been a medical doctor, a specialist in his field. His wife, also a participant, had been a primary French teacher. The other man had been a university professor of economics. The other woman had been a nurse. None of these people's credentials would be valid in Canada until they had passed examinations.

According to Omaggio's (1986) proficiency scales, these students would be rated at level two on a scale of four. This means that they communicated by

> joining sentences in limited discourse;
>
> good control of morphology of the language (in inflected languages) and of the most frequently used syntactic structures;
>
> elementary constructions usually handled quite accurately, but does not have a thorough or confident control of grammar;
>
> some miscommunication;
>
> (words) understandable to a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners. (Omaggio, 1986, p. 51)

Interview Logistics

The class schedule at Winnifred Stewart allowed participants a two-hour break from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Each day I tried to have one, two, or even three interviews. I transcribed these at home and completed a preliminary analysis, attempting to find the semantic domains that were significant to the participants, and to see how the internal relationships within those domains suggested new questions to include in the interviews of the following day.

I always gave the participants a copy of the interview they had completed the day before. We would take the time to go through these documents before beginning the next interview. In this way the participants had time to discuss with me what they had said and the reasons why they had said what they did. I asked them what meaning they would give for certain words they had used. In seeking clarification of detail I was able to see how the stages of their experiences in language learning fit together.

Sometimes of course, what they meant was not evident; at those times I seemed to be retracing my steps and missing how other terms fit into the whole picture.

I would laugh with empathy as what they said seemed to remind me of something I knew already so well. Other times, all I could do was feed back what I heard because what I was trying to understand was not based on any familiar experience for me. I felt inexperienced, as if in my life I had not known a fifth of the challenges that these four had known. I listened with a sense of awe to the tales of conflict they had faced. I was envious of their trials because these people had come to know themselves and trust themselves more in consequence.

There were many times when the participants had to change their appointments at the last minute and our interviews were postponed sometimes for days. At the end of the interviews, I was almost two weeks behind my original schedule. But these complications presented different routes of observation and completed another part of the picture I was beginning to see myself describing.

When a participant needed to explore job opportunities or meet with another person in different areas of the city, we often made appointments to go together so

that I could assist by becoming a guide and/or coach. These interchanges were valuable to a linking of ideas and events which we discussed throughout the interview process.

Example Interview Questions

Here are some examples of questions asked in this study based on Spradley's (1979) taxonomy.

Descriptive Questions

In order to understand the study setting, I asked descriptive questions or questions which were meant to encourage the participants to talk about their learning environment and experiences as second language learners. Descriptive questions can be divided into grand tour, mini-tour, example, experience, and native-language questions.

Grand Tour Questions. Grand tour questions are questions that request the participant and observer to provide descriptions of the general picture of a situation. Typical Grand Tour Question: "Can you tell me what it's like to be an English as a Second Language learner?"

Specific Grand Tour Questions: "Could you tell me what you were talking about when people were talking between themselves during class today?" "Tell me about how (when and where) you did your homework yesterday for today's class." "What are the specific kinds of language you need; the vocabulary that you need to develop?"

Guided Grand Tour Questions: "How would you check your homework?"

Task-Related Grand Tour Questions: "I'd like you to make a map of the school and tell me about what you do in each area." "Have you ever been upstairs?" What's on the other side of the Winnifred Stewart School?" "Where do you prefer to eat lunch?"

Mini-Tour Questions: (Like a Grand Tour question only on a smaller scale.) "Could you tell me what you talk about during lunch time at AVC?" "Could you tell me what people come to the counsellor for? What do they talk about?"

Example Questions: An informant said that they only used the classrooms downstairs "in the case of an emergency". I asked an example question: "Can you give me an example of an emergency for which you would have to change classrooms?" This led to further information about the study environment and the variety of teaching styles and resources used to teach English at AVC.

Experience Questions: The informants had difficulty answering experience questions even when I asked them to try to think of a particular experience which they would always remember from AVC. The stories of actual happenings tended to come out through example questions or as a result of grand tour or mini tour questions.

Native-Language Questions: Time was a valued commodity for the adult ESL student, so it was not surprising that the participants came up with specific terms of their own while talking about their routine. For example, they used terms such as "study time", "wait time", "time to check information from class", and "time to check homework". While the last two phrases refer to time spent at home, the first two are especially relevant to the school environment.

Direct Language Question: An example of asking for clarification would be:

Participant: "In this session there is so much more of the wait time."

Interviewer: "What is 'wait time'?"

Participant: "This time between classes, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. We don't feel like studying but we have no choice. It is lost time."

Hypothetical-Interaction Questions. I asked many hypothetical-interaction questions, such as: "If I were sitting behind you in class while your instructor was giving a grammar lesson and you started talking to someone else, what would I hear you say?" or "If I could overhear any of the conversations that go on during class, what would people be talking about?"

"If you wanted to ask a question about something you didn't understand, how would you do it?" "What would you do in an interview with the counsellor? How would you greet her, speak to her, and how would you finish the conversation?"

Typical-Sentence Questions: When I wanted more examples of how participants would use a certain word or phrase, I asked them. For example, the term "problem" was used in various ways, so I asked: "You were saying that if we only superficially cover a problem in class, then that problem is going to come up later again and again. Can you tell me some of those problems that keep recurring for you?"

Structural Questions

Although I continued asking descriptive questions throughout the interview process, I was able to include more structural questions as I went along. These were questions which allowed me to verify my interpretation of how terms and semantic relationships fit into domains. The kinds of structural questions which I asked were: verification questions (included term verification and semantic relationship questions), cover term questions and included term questions.

Verification Questions: "What kinds of groups are there at AVC?" This question elicited the description of "beginner", "intermediate" and "advanced" second language learners, but also implied groupings according to country of origin of which the main divisions stated were "Eastern Europe", "Asia" and "Africa".

Included Term Verification Questions: "Is your recent understanding of the conditional tense a sign of improvement in English?" (i.e.: Is X a sign of improvement in L2?)

Semantic Relationship Verification Questions: "Is the fact that your children have good food to eat during the day a reason 'to be quiet' about your children while you study?"

Cover Term Questions: This became the most frequently used type of structural question. For example: "What are all the ways to be 'tolerant'?"

"What are all the ways to be 'flexible'?"

Included Term Questions: Included term questions followed cover term questions easily by asking the participant if there were any other "ways to be flexible" or "reactions to immigrant life", etc.

Record Keeping and Analysis

Finally, after seven weeks, the interviews were complete and I sat down to codify the transcriptions onto a program by Qualis Research Associates, called *Ethnograph: A Program for the Computer Assisted Analysis of Text Based Data*. The coding, although a tedious task, served to link ideas which had settled in the back of my mind as I did the interviews. I found that I was writing constantly as conclusions came to me in this second review of the data. The code words became the essence of each idea which brought me to an interpretation of the data.

Often during the write-up I have wished that I had saved not only the transcripts but also the taped interviews to refer to. Now that I have only my descriptive notes and memory to draw from, I am concerned that something of the emotion or intent of the message will be distorted. When I find that something does not fit I go back to the raw data and try to find out why.

It is so tempting in the analysis to write down other people's written or verbal observations about the immigrant and second language learning experience. But what I thought I knew and what I observed this summer were not one and the same thing. There are similar lines; there are shades of meaning and there are allusions to the experiences of others; however, I found that the portrait of these characters could only be drawn from my perspective at this time, and that I was not denying the existence of other perspectives by doing this.

By providing this description, I am communicating what I saw and felt and learned. I think we all share some common illusions of what being a new immigrant second language learner is like. If I can show others what I observed by demonstrating the appropriate relationships between the things I saw, then my intent will be quite obvious and acceptable even from another's perspective. By detailing a current perspective I will not be changing the mutual understanding, but only presenting another point of view to be comfortably added to the knowledge already shared on this subject.

As each of us has come into contact with the adult second language learner, we have been aware of their experience from various vantage points. This summer I took

a particularly long look at a particular point in time and, with the help of four immigrants as guides, I sketched out the fundamental shape of how I viewed their experience. I continually asked questions about how one term fit with the next and how the life they depicted could be described through the medium of a second language.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

According to Werner and Schoepfle (1987), the best possible approximation of the internal view of a group is to "hone in" on information from both the ethnographer's observations (journal) and interview transcripts. For this reason, in this chapter I present first-person narratives from the point of view of each of the four participants. These are constructed from responses to questions and from transcriptions of the interviews.

Second, summaries of my notes and observations during interviews are presented.

The Interviews

One overriding observation about the interviews is that as the participants became more and more familiar with Canadian society they also became aware of how they could slip into similar problems of either complacency or chronic frustration with bureaucracy as they had known in Communist Poland. Even after all of their struggles, it was now more important than ever to be true to their values, needs and beliefs. They had made a new start. They wanted to be free of a government always looking over their shoulder. It was hard to ignore the many times when exactly the same thing happened here in Canada.

Jo-El

Jo-El is a nurse and homemaker. She and her husband have been in Canada for six months; they are sponsored by the Canadian government. The summary of her responses follows.

This school is very wonderful for me because before school I couldn't understand anything. I'm proud of myself for how much I understand now.

Oh, at first I was really discouraged about learning. My accent was terrible and I didn't think I would ever remember any of the words because the sounds were so different from in Polish. The rules confound me! I can never use them successfully in conversation. I need time to review them, to try to remember, and then I must practice them. I need to talk to people and listen to how they use those rules and in which situations.

In Polish we have another grammar. For example there are only three tenses in Polish. So English is very difficult. My problem is that I compare the two and I have to know why they're different. I have to have the grammar clear in my head and an example down on paper before I can use it correctly. Sometimes I wish I didn't have to have an explanation for why English is as it is. I wish I could just talk, like children do.

Why are people like this? They always want to know why something is happening. When we are learning language we want to know about the grammar rules and in which situation we can use this grammar and in which situation we should apply other rules. Children are very different. They listen and do what native speakers do. They don't question so much. And their pronunciation is better than adult second language learners'. Yet there are times when I learn best with laughter and imagery and games. Even new material I learn well in this way.

When I'm corrected immediately in how I say things, I am really encouraged to think and to try to say it correctly the next time. An explanation and text example on the blackboard doesn't work for me because it takes a lot of time to understand. But when the teacher helps me to think about what I'm saying, I understand that I can correct the language I use, and I learn easier and faster.

Sometimes I get tired of English and I don't want to listen to this language any more. When I must talk in English for a whole day I get really tired. I want to talk but I get so tired I start forgetting words, even words that I know well. Sometimes I say it in my second language, Italian, and not in English and not in Polish. It's infuriating to try to remember the words! I feel like a beginner.

There has to be time to study at home because without this nobody can learn language very well. I need this time to concentrate on English and make sense of what I'm reading. Then I can try to use what I've learned in everyday life.

The biggest problem is finding enough time to discuss. I learn so much from people who know how to speak and who speak slowly so I can understand them. Even better than asking questions is being corrected by someone else. Sometimes I make the same mistake over and over again and I'm never corrected. As time passes, I begin to think that the way I say something is O.K., even if it isn't.

If I've been talking English constantly for 2 or 3 hours, I get really tired. I need something to eat and time to relax before I can understand and speak well. Sometimes I get so tired that I can't think in English. Information comes in and goes out and I don't remember. Sometimes I'm not aware of using words from other languages in the middle of an English phrase. But I know that I really need this language and that I must study it even if I don't like it. Even if I'm tired.

If I'm getting tired and it's getting harder to speak English, then I'll change something, like go for a walk or go shopping. Some movement works well. When I'm tired in class, I don't listen, and then I can't give the right answers to questions. But when we have an exciting way of reviewing or using new words or phrases in class, say in a game, I find I can remember them without learning at home. I don't learn by repeating after the teacher. You can't remember in this way. You only repeat, repeat, and repeat, but it goes in one ear and out the other.

When I make a class presentation the others are listening at first, but unless I make my speech interesting to them, they will only pretend to continue listening. I like to allow them to question me and then they begin thinking about what I'm saying. It helps to have something like photographs or a film to help people imagine what I'm talking about. If I feel I'm not being understood, I organize my message in another way.

When a teacher gives me too much homework I don't do any of it. But when I'm given just enough to manage well, I do all of it, and I learn more. When it's not too

much, I feel I must do the work because it's reasonable. But when I can't see the end of it, I don't have the courage to start.

There are problems too with finding a time and place to study. After school I work in the home until 7 or 8 o'clock. Then it's time to do homework. I don't like to listen to music when I study. My husband has the radio and T.V. on and it doesn't interrupt his work. But it interrupts me. By 10 o'clock I'm so tired I have to go to bed. I like to sleep. I can't study at night.

There are a lot of new words with every lesson and I want to learn the meaning of each of them. But when there are too many new words, I just forget them. I go on to another lesson where I forget other words. For me it's not a good idea to be flooded with vocabulary. I don't have any experience in how to remember new words. I must hear them 20 times before I remember them.

When I can imagine the new word in an interesting sentence, it's meaning becomes clear. But sometimes when I find a new word while I'm reading I can't immediately understand it even if I have a sentence with the word in it. When it's important to know the real meaning, I go to the Polish dictionary and the meaning becomes clear. Then when I find the same word in another sentence, I remember what it means.

I don't usually need to translate from Polish to English. It's just when words are very difficult that I may go to the Polish translation. Even native speakers of English will find words which they are not familiar with. My Polish is useful to me at times like this. Sometimes the English word may have its origin in another language, and then my first or second language may be directly applied.

I like to be able to see or imagine a situation in which the new word is described or which the new word helps to describe something. When I'm reading, I make a picture of the situation in my head. When I do this, I'm understanding what I'm reading about.

Kathy

Kathy is an elementary school language teacher and homemaker. She and her husband and two children have been in Canada for six months on Canadian Government sponsorships. Her summary follows:

You can tell when a teacher has had to learn a second language during his or her adult life. Their methods of teaching are very good because they understand their students by having had similar experiences themselves.

A teacher must remember that the students in any one class have many different proficiency levels. My understanding of grammar in Polish and in French helped me to learn English grammar. I have learned English very quickly thanks to the educational training I received at university in Poland. But while I was given grammatical training in order to teach, many of my cohorts were studying other things and so for years since high school they haven't had any contact with grammar problems.

Now suddenly they are taught English through grammatical terms and it's very hard. It's not a really good way to teach us because we need to learn the English language and not about language. We need to learn the spoken language. Too many teachers spend time lecturing about language and too little time practising speech and dialogue; too little time on very practical things.

We waste a great deal of effort on trying to remember grammatical terms. We need more emphasis on practical training. O.K. mention it. Explain it. But don't repeat it and don't concentrate on these problems.

Even though many grammar terms are strange and difficult to remember for some people, they can still do exercises without any errors. They may not know what kind of exercises they did or what kind of grammatical changes they made, but they did not have any problems giving the correct answer on a test. I can transform sentences with adverb clauses or adjective clauses or noun clauses or anything else but I don't have to give a name to what I'm doing. I just need to use the language.

Next to the teacher, we learn the most in second language from books. My theory is that the beginning books given to second language learners must be uncomplicated and logical. I must be able to understand what happens, and not be concerned about:

"My God, I don't understand this book!" I will tackle more complicated plots in one or two years, when I have more experience with the language. Not now. Not at my present level.

We have an enormous amount of studying ahead of us. I think about our living conditions and I know we need more things at home but I'm only an ESL student. I'm a housewife. I'm a mother. I'm a daughter whose mother is far away in Poland. I think of the belongings we left behind and the pieces of memory of our past.

These thoughts enter my head all day long. I think often of Mother and I imagine what it would take to bring her here. Then the financial barriers block me again. This "background noise" interrupts my language study no matter how important I know it is for me to learn English well.

Here in Canada we must think about our future. English is just one piece of a very big and difficult mosaic: our life. Every month I am older than the last. Time goes on.

Sometimes in the transit country I felt very old and very tired. But now that I'm here and in school and I see how well my children are doing I don't feel old. Still, I don't have much time to get ahead. I am thirty-five. I believe that it will be important to secure a position before the age of forty. Four and a half years at my age will go faster than for a younger person.

I am not only responsible for myself. I have a family and that means that for every problem and in every situation our mind is divided to accommodate the four people in our family. When my home and family life is well, it is easier to study English. When I have a good husband who loves me, children who love me and help me with my work at home, when I am some place I want to be, all these things help me to study English and to do all of the things which I have to do. A family atmosphere of love is the most important part of our lives. It is our force which allows us to accomplish many other things, not only what we have to do but all of those activities which are over and above a sense of duty.

Thanks to my family I have learned English. My husband and I work together and support one another. When I have something very important to do, when I must be

very well prepared for something, he does all he can to help me. He does my work at home and brings the children out. The food is prepared so that I can be comfortable. When he has something very special to do and needs silence, I help him in the same way, because at that moment, he is the most important person in our house.

We have been together through university study and martial law, as refugees and as landed immigrants. Always we have helped each other in this way. Immigrant life is very difficult and many couples' love is not strong enough to withstand the problems. Many get divorced. This immigrant experience is like some kind of exam for us, and sometimes people are not well prepared for it.

We have had many trials. The decision to leave Poland was very stressful. We had to decide not only for ourselves but for our children. It was a difficult decision and once done, it is done. We decided in Austria, not in Poland that we would leave. After that decision, many other problems were ahead of us.

When you're an immigrant you become very careful in all situations until you feel who you can trust and who you can't. The refugee period gives you some experience in this. The refugee camp held many surprises. We had bad experiences with the police and with camp clerks. We were treated like criminals while they took pictures, fingerprints, and asked very personal questions.

Throughout this time in the transit country, we remained refugees, without equal human rights. This is a stress that causes some people to crack and become dangerous. In Poland I had lived with friends who were very kind and good. We understood each other very well. We helped each other and we enjoyed being together. In the transit country, there were many different people who had quite a different style of life. They did not understand me. I did not understand them. Yet we had to live together.

People usually didn't work. They had no money. Many of them became thieves and criminals. The police really had a lot of work to do there. Sometimes, when you could get a job on the black market, another refugee would get jealous, and would become your enemy. When people don't work they don't have money but they still want to be able to buy things. They want to live as other people do. But in this state

of a lack of cultural unity, there is no structure for knowing. They would turn each other in for having a job or they would become thieves and criminals.

For us it was very hard to live without having a job because we were used to working very hard all day and sometimes all night, as my husband had always done as a doctor. In the Polish hospitals doctors worked all day, all night, and all the next day. Sometimes we didn't see each other for 2 or 3 days at a time. Suddenly we didn't have our jobs. We had lost a sense of duty and that was a shock for us.

We had to deal with the problem of finding a country which would accept us. Very few countries were able to accept refugees as immigrants. Immigration was particularly difficult from Austria. People often received letters of refusal without interviews. It was like finding a job here in Canada to try to obtain a Canadian visa there. Incredibly difficult.

During this period of waiting we were living in a part of the world which was very different from what we were used to. We had come from a poor country with poor shops. Western Europe was very rich and well-developed and there were such wonderful shops that sometimes people lost their self-control. For many people this new reality was a shock.

I remember it was a shock for me too when I first saw this different world. But I saw that it had all been created for people. I kept my senses to be able to profit from all of the ideas which were offered to us. Many others, however, lost their self-control and became thieves. It is so much easier to steal in Western countries than in Eastern countries. The shops are so big and often there is no one watching.

I feel unable to explain these situations to you. My English is too limited for me to be able to express my feelings. I have only brought up a few points and these are limited in the face of the experiences we have lived.

It was so upsetting, for example, to be condemned in the eyes of other Poles because of our education. All people with an education had the same problem with other Polish people. I was most concerned in Austria where my children were terrorized by other children.

I can't deny my education. I was not brought up to be distrustful, but at those times in Austria I often cried within my silence. It was not only Polish workers who behaved in this way but all of those who had gone through communist educational systems. Our socio-economic levels made us different from one another and made us enemies. I believe that educated people who know more about the world, about other cultures, history, and literature, are more tolerant and prepared to live together with different nationalities and levels of income.

I love my homeland very much. The main reason why I left was because of the communist system there. For me Poland was, is, and will be my first homeland. I chose Canada as the best place to live at this time, but Poland, where I spent thirty-four years, where all of my family lives, and where I developed intellectually, will forever be my first and unique homeland.

My country is in ruin, in economic and environmental ruin. The problems inherited by those who have overthrown the ruling group are insurmountable. The Polish economy has been absolutely destroyed.

The situation has caused a few million young, usually educated, people to leave Poland. Now, even though many Polish-Canadians living here think about going back to Poland, they are afraid of the situation there. Wages are the same as they were two years ago but prices are like here in Canada.

The greater part of my life has been spent within a communist regime. When I was nine years old, everything was all right for me because I didn't know another system and other values. But when I began to think about it and to read more, some values were changed.

We lived in Silesia for eight years, an industrial region and the site of one of the worst ecological catastrophes in the world. It has been polluted and changed beyond repair. While we lived there, there was secret research going on into the health risks to residents of the region.

I observed some terrible injustices once I began work as a teacher. During those nine years of teaching in four or five different schools, I saw so many injustices and stupid decisions that I became totally against communism. In this kind of a system one

cannot say anything against a decision which was made by some important person. Nevertheless, decisions were constantly coming at us from higher levels of government.

After the Second World War there was a reign of terror throughout Poland. Many people were killed because they didn't think the way that communist ideology told them to think. The idiotic, illogical decisions never ceased. The slogans and the speeches drove us mad.

The system did not, however, destroy our roots. It could not erase our heritage even through the program of "socrealism" which was an attempt at reculturalization through the arts and literature. Now all of that is forgotten because its reason for being was dependent upon the communist system. The socrealistic direction in the arts is of no value now because it was artificial to begin with.

For my children, Poland is very far away now. Here, everything is familiar: friends, school, toys, T.V. They feel good here. I enjoy seeing them grow and be glad in this country. Sometimes I see through the eyes of my children, but it's impossible to erase the past. I hope that in the next few years I will find how very happy I am here and that the choice to come to Canada was reasonable, good, and helpful to my children.

Even though many people in Western Europe are richer than Canadians, I am happier here. As a landed immigrant and future citizen I have the same rights as all people living here. In most European countries I was and perhaps always would be "something" and not "someone" because I come from Eastern Europe. This is why so many people come to Canada and don't want to stay in Western Europe. They prefer to have equal opportunities.

This country will have many opportunities to become rich and more important as an humanitarian country in the world. Canada is a young country made up of peoples from all over the world. Because Canadians have been able to build the country we see today, it's possible they will make their country even richer and more developed in the future.

My opinion may change, however, after living here a few years. I know of many bad things already, bad politics and bad problems which are old and unsolved for example with the Indians. But right now I believe this country really does have a chance to become one of the most developed, humanitarian nations in the world.

I am glad to be here. I am happy. Canada has of course some aspects which I don't like but that is true of all countries. It is impossible to find the ideal place. In Canada's more stable environment I feel really comfortable. I know that tomorrow I could go shopping and buy all of the things I need. In Poland, the inflation was so great it was impossible to proceed. Here, I know that with the money I have I will be able to attain my basic needs. With the basic needs met, I don't worry about tomorrow.

Canada gave us the opportunity to leave Poland; gave us landed immigrant visas, gave us a governmental living allowance, and schooling. We have more freedom and some job opportunities. From this point on, my life is what I make of it. It is very important that we have the same human rights as other Canadians.

I am flexible. I want to understand others' behaviour and others' ideas. Many times new people seem crazy to me but when they can explain their ways of doing things, I can find ways to understand them. I can make up my mind to join such people or not.

I think that to live with so many nationalities, with so many cultures and backgrounds, we must be flexible and we must be tolerant. I was that way before and I am that way now, and I think that I will be that way until the end of my days. I cannot imagine any other way of living with Canadians. I must cooperate with them because there is a multicultural reality in Canada.

If I were a racist, or some "very proud of myself person", it would be impossible to be happy here, and I am here to be happy. I want to be happy, and with "very strong myself behaviour" and with tolerance, I think I will be happy here.

It's really very enlightening to live with different nationalities and different cultural backgrounds. I am enjoying it very much. Of course I don't have to accept all of everything I see, but maybe some piece of this culture or that culture will be good

for me, and I can bring it to my own familiar tradition. I am not shocked by what goes on here. I am not worried about anything. I really feel comfortable and good here.

Wherever I've been in Canada I've met people from all over the world. They are all Canadian, but they say they are also Spanish-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, Indian-Canadian, African-Canadian, and so on. I appreciate their feelings very much. It's really no problem for me to speak, to work, and to play with these people. It doesn't matter to me what nationality, race, or colour they are. I look only for honesty, a good, hard-working character, some humour and for the adjectives that describe the good side of humanity.

Can you imagine if Canadians fought between themselves because one didn't like Germans, another didn't like Ethiopians, and a third didn't like Mexicans? Canada would not survive. We must be together. The people who come here realize this before coming to Canada and must remember it during their life in Canada.

We have to be together and to cooperate for our own sakes and for the sake of our families and our futures. Without cooperation and compromise, this country will be destroyed too. Cooperation is evident around us now because this country is flowering.

I enjoy living now. All four people in my family are healthy. We have many good Polish and Canadian contacts. We've had good news with my husband getting his first job. My own plans are promising. I am able to learn English and speak with you.

I try to see this good side to life in Canada. I will be optimistic. I came here to enjoy life and much of that is up to me. This attitude helps me through the difficult situations such as finding a job.

Finding a first job is particularly difficult because you need language fluency and "Canadian experience". Many people are offered the very worst jobs for the lowest pay. It's a very bad feeling when you aren't appreciated by others for who you are. Sometimes you feel you could do the job well or even better than another but you can't get it because of some precedent or principle. But you can't be above this. You must follow the same rules as others do.

I feel fortunate to be here even if there are obstacles to overcome. I'd love to have a home of my own here. I love a home with nice furniture, and the many things which are precious to me. I dream of having my own nest here in Canada. I am not a nomad. I enjoy travelling but I like to return to my own place. For now I must wait.

Yvon

Yvon is a medical doctor and specialist in his field. He recently accepted a job as a medical research assistant. During the interviews he spoke slowly and carefully. He had set himself high goals for success. His summary follows:

Studying language has always been different from studying medicine for me. There's so much in medicine to be learned by heart. Whereas there are some rules in language to be learned by heart, a more important way to study English or any other language is by feeling.

It is very important to keep a melody and feeling of confidence in language. We understand the parts of language when we are able to feel that something is right. Rules are important but I believe feeling what is right is more important. For example, recently our teacher explained the conditional so well that now I understand and I know that my last exercises in it are correct. Now I know by feeling how to use it and when.

Taking time to review through practice is very important. The best way to practice is through meetings with native speakers and at work. For example, I have difficulty with idioms, prepositions, and articles. Articles are terrible for me! I know the rules but sometimes I sweat about them. To remember vocabulary and idioms it is better to have a chance to repeat and to use these words. Whenever I have the opportunity, in any situation, I try to use them.

In fact, it would be better to study English and to use English in a place where we are going to work. Besides going to school we need to work with native speakers. It is very important to improve one's professional language by working on language at your chosen place of work. It is important to realize, however, that I cannot learn the language I need in some restaurant as a dishwasher.

Listening all the time at school is boring and sad. We waste time in class by talking about unimportant things. Yesterday, for example, a classmate asked a very basic grammar problem. I get really impatient with this use of class time because I find that discussion of what I already know disrupts the order in which I learned my grammar and can ruin that order and confuse me.

Professional courses and language learning could be combined. Language learning could be done in the place where we are going to work. In this way we would focus on professional vocabulary and our learning could be more specific.

The best way to know a language is through repetition. In Latin there is a proverb which means "repetition is the mother of study". Whenever I speak in class, I try to use solutions to the grammar problems with which I have the most difficulty because in this way I have the opportunity to be corrected by my teacher. I remember for so long my mistakes. If I am corrected, I'll remember the correction.

Our children have an advantage over us because they are in classrooms with other native speakers. They speak quickly to each other and are corrected by their peers. But if our teacher doesn't correct all of our spoken language, we listen to mistakes like tape recordings from each others' mouths.

I think correcting students' speech is a good way to study English. We asked our teachers to correct us. I understand their problem that if people make a lot of mistakes and they are constantly being corrected by their teachers, they may feel ashamed, stop speaking, or stop trying.

The relationship which exists between the teacher and the students is very important. If this relationship is friendly, it is much better for studying language than when there is some distance. A great distance between the two parties is terrible.

I believe that the best way to study language is through contact with native speakers. Under such circumstances I only have one choice: to go to work! My greatest hope is that I will improve my language skills with contacts at work. This is the way to develop the same natural ease in English as we have when we communicate with our Polish friends in Polish.

I am afraid of my spoken English at work. My vocabulary is not very great and I must seem confused to native speakers because I cannot express my feelings, my opinions, and my ideas openly. I think often about what will happen when I begin my job and I dream.

Two days ago I dreamed for the first time in my life in English. I spoke with people in English. It was some strange place. There was only one other person I knew. I read it as good fortune.

It's hard for me to tell you what I want you to know. We left our heart and soul in Europe, in Poland. Sometimes when I look back on my past I feel like a plant torn from the soil. This is understandable. We were raised in one culture. We've been educated. Now we have to begin all over again. If I knew English better I would be more accepting of the changes. I would be more able to deal with the problems we face.

A lot of newcomers go through a period of time where they refuse to accept the rules of their new country. Many of us pay a high price for a new start in a new society and culture. Everything is new to us. Those of us who can become accustomed to life here faster will be the winners.

My dream is to become a licensed doctor and I will succeed. I have had an interest in medicine for two-thirds of my life. My occupation is also my greatest interest.

I think it is very important that doctors be tolerant. As a doctor in a communist system, however, I had certain rules to follow. Very often I chose to act against such rules because I could see how they might harm the people under my care. In a communist system, one encounters such dilemmas in every part of daily life. We have been living under a dictatorship all of our lives. We never accepted those rules. Canadians don't know how hard it is to live under another's opinions and be forced into strange behaviour.

When I look back on my past I find pleasure in reliving the situations when I showed the courage to clash with bad opinions, bad rules, and bad situations. The "big shots" found I was a "black sheep". I was an activist in Poland. I never accepted the

communist rules, this is due to the education which I received first from my parents, and later from my church. I am Catholic.

We left Poland when it had a communist government and there was no hope of change. Two years ago we believed we were living the worst time of our lives. We were aware then that there would be great difficulties ahead of us. Our decision was a desperate one.

In Austria my courage helped me through some difficult times. I kept my goal in view until only my family, from among many other people, got a positive answer from the Canadian Consulate.

Finally we arrived and I was faced with the fact that I am not young. I saw that people of my age in Canada had stable jobs. I am only beginning my search and I am old. Each year I am older. There are many obstacles ahead of me.

I know that being conscious of my age as compared with other people determines my opinions. Younger doctors have a better chance than I have because they have sometimes 10 years working in their favour. Ten years which I haven't any longer. They have this advantage over me.

Of course there are some advantages to being older. I am more experienced than other people. My teachers seem to respect my opinions, and they solicit my opinion. Even as compared to others in my group, I know many things.

I am more tolerant than other people. I can look at problems from two sides. I try to look at problems not only from my position but also from the point of view of my friend or classmate or acquaintance. I like to wonder about and analyze the information which comes my way. It is part of my character to wonder about the world rather than act without thinking. Young people don't think as deeply about things. They want. They do.

I am not embarrassed to be who I am. I have hope for the future. I am a lucky man because I have a position in my area of expertise. I have a wonderful wife and family. I am a friend of our friends, Canadian, Polish, and Polish-Canadian. I am a doctor. I am an optimist. I believe we will pass all of our exams and that my family and I will know greater happiness than we do now.

Generally I am happy now. I am a student at Alberta Vocational College, a student of English as a Second Language. I know what kinds of problems I have with second language. I feel which parts of English are easy for me and which are difficult and I am not afraid to ask questions so that I will learn. I have a lot of courage and the will power to ask until I understand.

Peter

Peter was a university professor and researcher, and a specialist in marketing in Poland. His two sons are in their late teens. His wife was a cartographer in Poland and has worked at a daycare in Edmonton since their family's arrival six months ago. He was sponsored by the Polish Congress. A summary of his responses follows:

I was in marketing research and education. I want to get professional training here in my field where I could improve my professional language and return to teaching. Besides the Alberta Vocational College, I've taken two courses at NAIT, one in marketing and the other was a salesmanship course. During those two courses I improved my English terms.

I would like to find a language training program which would make me much more comfortable with my professional work. As a professor, I feel I could present the information, but at this point, I am not sure that I could answer all of the students' questions.

It's important to use English in other contexts than in the English classroom. For example, the courses at NAIT were given in English and I also had to interact with my classmates. It's also important to study English from the point of view of one's professional background. For example, I enjoy the area of teaching and research which was my life's work in Poland. I feel that learning English doesn't have to mean "being obliged to learn". It can be pleasant too. I could have some fun with English if I could quickly learn to apply it to what I like to do best.

It is important to note that this approach applies on a personal level as well. For example, we are presently reading *Fahrenheit 451* (a Ray Bradbury science fiction novel on government control). I don't like this book. At this time I would be much

more interested in descriptions of beautiful scenery. I've lived through many problems created by too much government control. I have experienced the problems from *Fahrenheit 451* and I don't want to talk about them now. These days I would prefer some descriptive literature. I want to find some pleasure in reading and not only be obliged to read.

There are options in language training presented by other countries. In Germany, for example, classes are grouped according to education. The worker has a shorter course, the professional studies for a much longer period. After formal language education, the professional takes a specialized training course. One man I met had taken an 18-month professional course at the university after his language course and so had become familiar with the terminology he needed to continue his work as an electronic engineer.

I believe the reason for the differences in courses offered in Germany is based on the idea that it's easier for a worker to find a job. I could find a job as a worker too but to do so I would have to change my qualifications and start at the very beginning. I would rather find a job within my profession.

At any rate, one's English will improve with greater opportunities to speak English. I can give you an example from my own experience. I was a driver once for a professor from Glasgow University, who was on an exchange with our university, in Poland. As we drove, we spoke. He answered my questions and I understood him. He understood me. But in the back seat sat my English teacher and she corrected me all the time. After half an hour I just stopped talking. I couldn't bring myself to say any more. The situation was very difficult because instead of speaking I was thinking: "Is this correct or not?"

Once I had stopped conversing, she tried to speak with the Englishman. She asked him about how it was better to say things in English, in this way or in that way. He answered that he didn't know. He spoke in this way but he didn't know why it was better than another. She had spent a lot of time in London where she had studied English as a profession. They couldn't understand one another because she spoke about rules and he knew how to speak. It was the difference of a point of view! After

half an hour they stopped speaking too and we went the rest of the way in silence. I don't think she realized what she had done. I think that a teacher always wants to study rules.

I've done presentations in English where I've had a script in front of me and others where I knew what I wanted to say but had to try to say it in my own words. Actually I find the second way better: more spontaneous, interesting, a better feeling is conveyed. Of course it is more difficult but I am not a lazy person. You cannot be lazy if you want to learn English. Those of us who are learning it as a second language know how important it is to do well.

When I first came to Canada I wasted a lot of time. Maybe once I have a counsellor or an advisor it will be better, but because we were sponsored by the Polish Congress it was different. They helped us to find an apartment and offered to help us to find jobs. However, the only jobs they could suggest were cleaning and washing in restaurants.

I decided to go through the steps myself to find a job. I went to the University to ask about English and professional courses. I picked up brochures at Grant McEwan College, Alberta College, Alberta Vocational Centre, and at NAIT. Then I decided on my own where I wanted to go. I had also been advised to go to the Mennonite Centre. That in fact was where I began studying English conversation in Canada as the lessons were very inexpensive and at that time it was important not to spend much money because I didn't have a job and I didn't know what my future would hold.

I also attended a two-week job finding course at the Mennonite Centre. The problem was that while the information was useful to the worker, it was not helpful for professional people.

During these first weeks in Canada I wasted a lot of time by doing research which has already been done and that could have been made available to me through an advisor or counsellor. For a long time I didn't know what I was doing wrong in the job search. I would apply for the jobs listed in the classified adds in the "Journal". I went to many places and asked for work but I was always asked to fill out an

application and wait. And wait. And nothing happened. Finally I found a job after having applied at more than 30 places for work.

I became a security officer. This was not of course complicated or dangerous work. I met some native speakers so I could improve my spoken English, but it was very difficult even so because the other security officers were pensioners. They spoke very quickly and used a lot of slang and idioms and sometimes I didn't understand them completely.

After 5 weeks I interrupted my work to begin the English course at A.V.C. My job search, however, continues.

When we use words in sentences, we understand them and learn how to use them. Reading is very important. I enjoy reading short stories. I listen to the radio every day. Sometimes I will hear an interview on the daily news and I find that is a very useful way to learn new words because I feel I'm also keeping up to date.

Practice makes one a master of the language. I find that it's better to do exercises than to memorize rules. My own English grammar exercise book has the answers in the back and is very useful because I can immediately compare and correct my own answers. The only way to learn grammar rules is through practice, even for native speakers. In many cases, native speakers know less grammar than we do because as second language learners we study grammar very hard. I can't help but think that all this studying will be useful to future understanding and learning.

Correcting becomes complicated when there are too many demands upon your concentration. This is true for the native speaker as much as for the learner of English. For example, when my English teacher began correcting me while I was driving and trying to converse with the English professor from Glasgow I became too confused to continue my conversation. On the other hand, I sometimes ask native speakers to correct me and they find it complicates the situation. Many of them don't like to correct.

It is very important that ESL teachers know how to correct and how to teach people from foreign countries. They do much better if they have had experience in teaching English as a Second Language in matters of choosing material for example.

Much of our time is directed by our teachers right now. We must do our homework. A second priority for me is to read newspapers and the journals which specifically address news in my profession. I realize that I will have more success in finding a job if I have an extensive English-language knowledge of what's going on in my profession.

In free reading, I usually choose a simple story of adventure or mystery. I look for stories with a happy ending. I like James Bond, and simplified versions of Shakespeare. For listening, I prefer the 7 a.m. radio news and catch the 10 or 11 o'clock evening news on television. Usually I'll listen to the radio at 4 or 5 o'clock when I get home but when I'm tired I'll go for a half an hour sleep instead.

I learned Polish a long time ago, but I know that I improved my Polish through reading. I know I will improve my English by reading a lot of books as well. I enjoy short stories where there is a lot of conversation. Naturally, I want to focus on conversation.

One can have conversation anywhere. The more you converse, the better you will be able to identify your weaknesses. When I spoke with the Chairman of Business Administration at the University of Alberta, for example, I quickly began to realize that I must focus more on my professional language. He asked me some questions about research methods that I found I could not adequately answer using only the general level of English that I have. Of course, at that point, it's important to be well prepared for such a discussion or interview.

When I was in Poland, I had a very strict English teacher. (This was not the same woman as I told you about in the car.) This teacher would expect my eldest son (who took the lesson with me) and me to come prepared. For two hours twice a week she would correct our every mistake. After the class my shirt was wet with sweat. I was happy that my son came with me because when I was alone she spent all of her time speaking with me. I really felt I was making progress, however, so that now I dream of finding a teacher here in Canada who could continue that kind of training.

I have a reading teacher at present. He's helping me to improve my oral reading but he forgets to correct my speech. He says he's concentrating so much on what I'm saying and what we're talking about that he forgets to correct me.

However, it is important that the subject of conversation or presentation be interesting. I've noticed that when class presentations are too specific or technical, everyone goes to sleep. Topics should be kept general and presentations should involve the audience as much as possible.

For my next presentation, I've chosen to discuss language and how we use it in particular situations. Although this is not directly related to my area of specialization, I believe it will be interesting to those who will have to listen to my speech.

My last presentation was based upon Maslow's study of the hierarchy of needs. I considered that it might be of interest to everyone in our class because it's very important for new immigrants to satisfy their basic needs. For us, an example of a basic need would be gaining language skills, and finding a job. On another level, we need to belong to a social group, a club for example. And then, of course, we hope to know self-actualization in this new country.

I would describe basic needs and meeting safety needs as choosing a proper school for your children, getting a job, and having more stable living conditions. These needs must be met before you are able to think more freely about the higher needs.

Language is the first and most important step for all immigrants. One of the first basic needs is language.

A teacher must be aware of the immediate basic needs of the students and keep in contact with the class. I find that it's important to maintain contact with the class all the time and not stand with your back to the class, writing on the black board for long periods. I allow people to ask questions but there are two ways to do this. If the question addresses the topic of discussion, I take the time to answer it immediately, but if not, the question is taken down to be discussed before the end of the lesson.

One of the more important items in teaching is to discuss the rules of the class-room with the class at the first lesson. Students need to know what the teacher wants them to do and what they will be allowed to do in class. There must be time for

discussion and appropriate questions. It's important to relax, tell a joke, watch the class and take information from the class. For example, the more important material may be best given in the early morning, leaving the less important lesson to the afternoon. Grammar, for example, demands more attention than reading and listening, and should be studied in the morning.

After a number of years of experience, the teacher will have some idea of what is difficult to understand. Then he or she will be able to pay more attention to that part of the material and prepare and develop aids to teaching. It's very important in teaching foreign languages to vary the form of teaching by using film, books, exercises, etc.

Learning English does not stop when you finish a course. It's almost a lifetime process. When I have more time I will come back to that part of learning which I didn't spend much time on before. I will learn new words and new vocabulary by reading the books I want to read.

When I read professional journals, I take notes or make summaries of some parts. Then I read my summaries several times. When I come across a term I don't understand I'll look it up in an English dictionary or encyclopedia. I'll use the Polish dictionary as a last resort. But when I want to express myself in writing I'll sometimes look in the Polish dictionary. The problem is that it is very important to begin to think in English and not in Polish. It helps to write the word down and to see it written. Listening is not the only way in which I will learn.

When I first came here, as with all new immigrants, I was under a lot of stress because I couldn't understand everything that was said. When I couldn't understand what was meant, I'd try to guess, of course. But when you try to guess a lot of things, you feel tired.

When your English is good enough to let you understand, you feel better about yourself. Now I can understand the general meaning, not every word, but almost everything that is said. It's almost pleasant for me to watch T.V. when I can understand what's happening on the screen.

I am sometimes jealous when I see people who speak fluently. I am obliged to concentrate when I want to say something. Learning a foreign language is a long process. I only hope that in the next months to a year it will be easier for me.

After I finish AVC I want to concentrate on my professional language and on spoken language. I want to find a very strict teacher who will correct my spoken language at all times because for my professional advancement it will be very important for me to be able to use English fluently, more fluently I think than I do now.

Without achieving a sense of stability and peace of mind the immigrant feels unsatisfied. Within the first two to three years in the new country, everybody wants to be able to realize their basic needs. Of course there may be different basic needs for me than for the labourer. I think the difference may be in terms of language. For me, learning language is very important, but maybe for a labourer language is not as important.

There may be differences for other needs as well. Those families who are sponsored by the government, for example, don't need to worry as much about their basic needs being met. During the first year they have money from the Canadian Government and after that they can get money from the Alberta Government. But this situation is different when people are sponsored by the Congress or have another non-governmental sponsor. Then they can only count on themselves.

When my family and I came here we had to find a job. We had some money saved but it was not much. So we had to look for a job. Those who came on government sponsorship didn't have to worry about that. From the beginning the government paid for their apartment and living expenses. It was easier for them to live. Basic needs are different for different immigrants. It depends upon their occupation. It depends on the source of sponsorship, and so on.

Of course you left a lot of things in your previous country. For example, I had a very nice house. It was like a condominium but it was much bigger, with a garden. I had a good career. I had always been at the university and my position was stable. As

I got older in Poland my position would increase in status because I would have more experience and would have written more books.

So we lost something. We gained freedom, yes, but we lost something too. Here I even had to get a new driving license, even though I had one from Poland. We've lost something. We must recognize that. And we must find something new here.

It's better for the family, of course, if we adapt to what is here. In many ways we have the same challenges as we had in Poland. Once I find a real job our family will be almost at the same level here as it was in Poland.

You must remember that Canada bought cheaper people by allowing us into the country. Immigration is the cheapest way to buy people. Raising children to enter the labour force means a great expense in time and education. On the other hand, most of the people who immigrate to Canada are prepared to work here. They have a profession. They are skilled in some way.

The investment in teaching people English is the cheaper investment for Canada. From the immigrant's point of view, of course, the government seems very generous. They have allowed us immigration status. They teach us English. Yet it's in the government's own interest to teach us and to prepare us for work. It is also in the government's interest that we be allowed to work effectively in our chosen profession.

When I return to my previous work as a security officer, I will have work. I will not have enough money. I will be disappointed. But if I were to get a position as an instructor at a college, my contribution would be much greater. My English would improve greatly through my motivation to do well. It would be interesting for the students to hear from a teacher from the Eastern Block. The material would be new and different for them.

The investment in our learning and professional training we received in Poland would not have been lost. In fact it is cheaper for the Canadian government to engage immigrants in proper work as soon as possible.

Once while I was in the transit country, West Germany, a psychoanalyst came and asked us a lot of questions. One of the questions she asked was, "How do you feel

when you don't know enough German to get by?" The students compared this feeling to being closed up in some place where you couldn't see. You feel very strange.

I felt somewhat different in coming to Canada because I had studied English before coming here. But now, with all the grammar rules, vocabulary, nuance, now everything is a mixture in my mind. I know I can use my basic knowledge of English but it will take me some time before I can feel comfortable at a higher level. Although I can understand more now when I watch T.V. and when I listen to the radio, I think that I have lost some of my spoken English. Now that I'm thinking about the new grammar rules and new vocabulary I'm sometimes lost in my English. It will take time to correct my spoken English. Maybe I'm actually improving but my feeling is that I've lost something.

I hope to have a more stable life in the future. Better accommodation. I need my own room, the way I had it in Poland. Now my desk is in my bedroom. When I do my research I put my papers on the floor. My wife comes along and wants to clean. She doesn't like to see all these papers on the floor. I think about the changes which would give me peace of mind. A better apartment or house; satisfying work. In one or two years I will no longer have any difficulty with my English. I can see that in only six months I have already improved my listening skills and my writing skills and knowledge of grammar. My problem now is to improve my spoken English.

Observational Notes

Throughout the interview process I took observational notes. As we spoke, there were expressions of emotion such as frustration, fatigue, fear, and anxiety. They had a sense of pride in what they had accomplished. I have compiled the following notes to more fully present the portrait of each of the participants.

Jo-El

Jo-El was the youngest participant. She felt the sense of relative youth and seemed to behave in the self-conscious and insecure ways of a young girl in the presence of more experienced grown-ups.

In Poland she had been trained as a nurse and had worked in the delivery room. At that time she thought she would never want to endure the birth of a child of her own. She had become pregnant a few weeks before I met her. Now, although still apprehensive, she was beginning to look forward to the experience of childbirth.

She and her husband had spent much time in Italy where they had looked after a large family's household needs and learned Italian from the five children. Now that they had immigrated to Canada, both were taking formal English classes at Alberta Vocational College.

She described her first encounter with English as quite discouraging. At the time of her arrival in Canada, she had been painfully aware of her accent and doubtful that she could ever remember any of the words because the sounds were so different from her mother tongue.

However, by the beginning of her second ten week session, Jo-El had shown enormous progress in English language skills. Because of the college's influence, and her teachers' encouragement, Jo-El began to find that her reflex was to speak in English. In fact, sometimes the Polish word would escape her and an English word would satisfy her needs at any given time. Whereas this was heartening, there were many other areas of stress in daily life which tormented her.

She found that when she really tried to speak in English for long periods she became extremely tired. Under such stress, she continued to understand but couldn't contribute to the conversation. Once she had a chance to relax, to eat, and to slow her pace, words came much more easily and she could communicate more effectively.

Jo-El knew the outcome of being tired. When the learner is tired, the mind drifts. You don't hear the questions. You cannot give an answer. Jo-El noted that she needed a change at those moments. She especially needed to do something while she learned. Things like working in the kitchen or shopping and language learning went well together. Conversely, when there was too much written homework, it would not get done.

Jo-El considered her memory to be inadequate. She did not know where the words she just learned could be found in her own memory. She had no experience in using

mnemonic devices and considered that those who had already learned second languages at school had an advantage over her because they must certainly have learned such techniques.

One day Jo-El visited the Ukrainian Village, East of Edmonton. She said some of the people there spoke Ukrainian. Ukrainian is similar to Polish and she found she could understand them. There were others who had learned how to say a sentence or two in Ukrainian but these latter ones were impossible to understand. The words and rhythm were wrong so that the message could not be shared. Because Jo-El could recognize the similarities between Ukrainian and Polish, she could understand when good Ukrainian was spoken. She was aware of how using variety in language is also important: "Like any other language you can say things in many ways."

Kathy

Kathy was a person who recognizes change and celebrates it.

When Kathy and her husband emigrated from Poland, they expected change. They have continued to expect it and embrace it finding that good and positive growth comes through change. There was always a creative way to see the difficulties that came their way.

Life in the transit country had been a shock. Kathy's husband had worked long, hard hours all of his life. Some weeks they had seen each other only seldom. Suddenly in the transit country, the family was together twenty-four hours a day and neither husband nor wife were prepared for the loss of a sense of duty that work had provided for them.

Kathy got a job on the black market and her husband stayed with their two daughters. This allowed him to get to know his daughters, and they him. The closeness and the understanding the whole family developed during the refugee experience gave them greater strength to face future tests of themselves as individuals within the family.

The best way to describe Kathy is "good and kind". She had left a well-established career in Poland as a Primary French teacher, and a well-defined social position

as a doctor's wife. She had been a mother and home-maker and had many good friends. Her background and upbringing were decidedly aristocratic and Catholic.

Kathy had a way about her that was wise and serious but there was a twinkle of light in her eyes and the ease of her laughter told me she had left the doorway to childhood open. Kathy was still the little girl who had thrilled to life and learning and who had grown to love and appreciate her own happy, light-hearted spirit.

Whenever I was with her she made me want to believe in elves and magic things. Her life had been a series of adventures, each building upon the last, with personalities and places harboured in her memory which accompanied her thoughts and brought tears of longing to the brim of her voice and to the eyes of her listeners.

Kathy humbly apologized as she tried to find the words which would tell me what I needed to know. How frustrated she was when I could not share the complete insight which a Polish phrase or proverb would have given me. Many times she would say that some day she would be able to tell me what she really wanted to be able to say.

Her entrance into a new political system and social environment had not meant a redefinition of character. If anything, the voyage through conflict had strengthened the identity of the very same person who had grown up in Poland. This was Kathy. The only thing that was actually different was the language with which she expressed that personality.

She spoke of tolerance. She had begun to realize how deeply she could reach into herself to expand the limits of what was acceptable and tolerable to her in her new social environment. Nowhere in the world could she have known a greater variety of peoples and cultures than in Canada. In Canada anything was possible.

Without conflict there would be no chance for growth. Kathy was a volunteer to conflict. In every childhood there is conflict and crises in everyday life and there is growth. The process of immigration and settlement presented anew this state of childhood.

Everything had been fine when she was young. She wasn't aware of how things could be different until she started to question what was going on. When she did that she could see something better. But in order to get there it became increasingly

evident that she would have to relinquish what she had, taking a great risk that what she saw as a possible alternative way of life was not a mirage. She read more, and with her new introspection, the values taught at school came under question.

The communist system had made an impression upon Kathy. It had created scenes of injustice and compromised her beliefs. It turned her against its ideology until staying in her homeland under the conditions of communism seemed like a worse scenario than stepping out into the unknown.

Kathy faced conflict in the transit country, but this conflict allowed her to define herself; where another stopped and where she began. Now in Canada, she was prepared to understand the other Canadians, and if not to accept their ways, at least to establish a basis for cooperation.

She described other refugees who had lost their sense of who they were once they reached the West and saw the carnival of activity and material culture. Many became thieves and criminals. They lost their sense of what was real. In the midst of conflict, she saw many people forsaking their sense of self and heritage.

Kathy and her husband made the final decision to emigrate only after they had left their homeland and only after the crisis of emigration had begun. They recognized the stress that this decision would create for themselves and their children. She was able to encourage positive growth throughout these changes because she maintained a sense of balance; a sense of who she was.

Under refugee status, the professional elite lived side by side with the labourer. She was taunted and denied by other refugees because of her education. I asked if she ever thought of denying her status. Her answer was negative. That would be paramount to accepting that part of refugee culture that she deplored. There was a finite line between where she ended and the refugee identity began. The conflict which served to bruise her ego then, helped to define Kathy as an individual in the long term.

What she has found since the challenges of the transit country has been a new delight in life and learning. She has sought happiness while maintaining a strong sense of self. She has found that meeting the wonderful variety of people in Canada makes

her very happy indeed. She has been enlightened through other cultures. She continues to question what she doesn't understand, and in understanding more, has found out more about herself; what she can accept and tolerate and what she can bring to her own developing sense of self and family.

Yvon

Yvon said the rules here were strange but he would accept them even though he didn't understand them all at this point in time. He was determined he would learn to live in this new land. Immigration had not just meant learning a new language, but finding enough patience within to be tolerant when you didn't understand why custom or bureaucracy dictated a certain behaviour.

He was able to please, ready to conform, because this was the only way to be accepted and to move up the career path. He recognized his need to change in order to get ahead.

Yvon was adamant that he shouldn't waste time. Time was a real threat to him because time was his enemy. Yvon was constantly trying "to get ahead". There was not much time for a balance in life of finding pleasure and getting ahead at work. He was fortunate to have chosen to make a career of his life-time fascination; medicine.

Yvon observed that most people his age have some kind of stable position, while he is just beginning. He desperately wanted the routine and financial stability he saw "everyone else" having at this time in their lives. He considers himself in transition.

Yvon is being forced to adapt, to change, to grow, and to learn. He is no longer the Polish doctor he left in those "worst of times" in Poland three years ago. He could only have stayed that way by dying there in Poland. He says if he had known of the changes to come to Poland then, that he knows now, he would have had a great deal more difficulty to emigrate. He feels the pull to wonder about what kind of stability he might have enjoyed there.

Life in Poland, however, would not have come to a stop. Nor would he have let himself stagnate. He's just not that kind of person. The challenges he has faced during the move he and his family made to Austria and then to Canada have caused him to

grow perhaps even more than today's boiling social climate in Poland would have forced him to. But there, at least, he could have opted for familiarity and a common language.

Here, in Edmonton at English classes and now at the research job with the university, he is being stretched to the limit every day. He is interacting with new ideas from new points of view. Nothing can be taken for granted. Everything must be communicated anew and in this different environment, even the familiar technology is somehow novel to him. His background is also new to those around him. He is having to explain himself, his training, and his point of view. A consequence is that he is enlarging the perspective of those around him as well.

Yvon had been trained to be a gracious conversationalist. He took pride in the fact that he was gentle and caring and could be sensitive to the other person's feelings. He was also proud of his ability to analyze a situation and when he reviewed his language instructors' performances he was determined not to let others waste his time to learn.

On the rough days when he was feeling as if his language skills had gotten into a rut and would never improve, his criticism of the teacher was sharper than ever. At these times, his whole situation seemed one of great stress. He had developed a saying for himself: "immigration is not recreation". His life from morning until night was full of tremendous stress. Everything was new, the shopping, the travel, the schooling, the need for a support system of friends and family.

I asked Yvon who he was. He said he was an older adult student. He was a doctor, and his wife's husband. He was the father of his children, and he was a lucky man. Most of all, he said, he was a doctor. Ever since he was nine years old he had wanted to be a doctor. His Canadian identity would be completed only by his becoming a doctor again.

He would learn to converse with patients in English or he would serve the Polish community here. It didn't matter. He had a dream. In Poland he could only be the kind of doctor they told him to be. He had to do what the hierarchy told him to do. This was intolerable to the imaginative child who had first thrilled to the idea of identity in career. The communist system was unacceptable.

Now in this new land there was plenty of room for anxiety. This was a new beginning. There were choices to be made. Would he realize his dream here? He sought a linear path. His preparation, care and self-directed focused behaviour would lead him to his goal.

Having been forced through much of the process of immigration, Yvon had come to the realization that no one government or community of individuals would satisfy all his needs. He had settled, instead, for a place where the most important laws would be upheld.

Yvon had an unusually strong character. He was successful in his own eyes because in the midst of great anxiety, he continued to look at two sides to every issue. There were obvious differences between his own background and that of the other peoples and cultures he was being bombarded with daily. One reaction might have been to become rigid and entrenched in the face of differences. Yvon, however, sought to understand another's point of view as if understanding would allow him to get in touch with himself.

Yvon had confidence. He also had a sense of optimism and tolerance and a personal goal which was, in the main, quite simple: to be happy. There is a light in Yvon's eyes that cannot be duplicated. He looks back on his past accomplishments with pride. He remains optimistic about his future. He is in awe about today.

I envied him his trial. I envied him his astonishment at the blows life dealt him and his surprise at his own strength to face the bully of time, make his own choices, and "keep his mind". He was right in his evaluation that many of us know much greater stability than he does at his age. But from his vantage point he has lost sight of how stability tempts the entrenchment of apathy. We grow tired in our smugness, our big homes and new cars, while he is forced to grow more deeply into the challenge of self.

Peter

Peter was an older participant. His two boys were in their teens and he had time to study at home now that his family had grown. He spent much of his time doing his

homework. Even when he had completed as many exercises as he could or wanted to do, he would read in his second language.

He was well aware of the necessity for professional language skills if he were to continue in his area of expertise in his new country. Of course, he could well become a labourer of sorts, but he had decided that for his self-esteem and for his family's welfare, he would be better off finding a more responsible, better paying job in either teaching or research. These were, after all, the fields he knew best.

Even though he found himself in another language and culture, so many of the theories and formulas he had studied and worked from in Poland could be applied here in Canada. At least the material would be familiar if he stayed in his old profession. Only the language would be different. Changing careers would only mean added stress.

It was an incredible stress to be an immigrant. Demoted from professor to ESL student meant a loss of prestige. In fact, Peter had never told his classmates what position he had actually held in Poland because he feared the humiliation he would have to endure if those who had held less important jobs there suddenly found themselves at the same level as himself and became disrespectful of him in order to resist what the upper classes had represented to the underprivileged in Poland.

Peter talked a great deal about preparation for interaction. His life now became a period of ceaseless preparation. Preparation for job interviews. Preparation for tests. Preparation even for conversation.

He took language learning seriously, impressed with his need for conversation lessons and native-speaker interaction. He preferred not to leave things to chance, but because he did not speak freely and use the other party to the conversation to the greatest advantage, ie: by bouncing his own ideas off of another's comments or feedback, he came across as being either insecure or lacking experience since he couldn't possibly have been prepared for the direction any one conversation might take.

The game of guessing what was meant when one didn't quite understand created continual stress for Peter. He felt jealous of those who spoke with fluency. His

language skills made him feel claustrophobic, or as if he had impaired vision. His life had been an endless tread-mill of self-sacrifice. He dreamed of an office of his own; a place to put his own papers.

He spoke of his homeland, of missing out on a future with the life he had known. Now suddenly the way he thinks, feels, and believes is different from what the people around him experience. For him, there is emotion connected with having the freedom which is taken for granted by Canadians. He wants to shatter their naivete and make them aware of the world around them.

In some ways, Peter felt he was having an influence on Canadians. In his presentations, for example, he came across as being well prepared. Even those who had no difficulty with the language had to admit that his example was one which should be followed.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Domains

Included Terms and Cover Terms

There were key words which the participants in this study used during their interviews. Words and phrases from the interviews were grouped into categories, depending upon the context and presumed intent of the speakers. The words and phrases were posited as "included terms," and a "cover term" was posited as the name of the category. The category itself is considered to be a semantic domain. In order to be sure that I understood the intent and context, I challenged my initial grouping of included terms under specific cover terms by further questioning in interview.

This grouping generated two main themes, as the participants detailed their feelings and experiences as adult second language learners. The themes are distinguished as (a) expressions of feeling; and (b) description of environmental factors.

The predominant expression of feelings was that of having "mixed feelings." I identified three major domains that dealt with that theme. The first is identified with the cover term "pushed and pulled," because it includes those terms and phrases the participants used as they expressed contradiction and ambivalence. The second cover term under this theme is "quality of life," in which positive values were objectified, in the context of mixed feelings. The third cover term is "anxiety and uncertainty," again, in the context of "mixed feelings."

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the cover terms "pushed and pulled" and "quality of life." The terms used by the participants, the included terms, are arranged in a sunburst style around the central cover terms. The reason that this scheme was chosen to represent the relationship between cover terms and included terms is that there is no implied analysis of the relationship between the included terms, and no

implied hierarchy of included terms. The circle is the best way to represent that lack of hierarchy.

Figure 3 is a schematic representation along the same lines, and shows the central cover term "anxiety and uncertainty" with its included terms arranged around.

The following description will serve to link the illustration of the relationship between cover terms and included terms in the figures in a way that communicates the cultural meanings discovered during the interview process.

The Theme of Mixed Feelings

Change challenges the human capacity to adapt to new situations. Extensive change to one's environment over a short period of time can create confusion and cause turbulent emotions to surface.

As a member of a particular group, a human being becomes familiar with a culture and language, and begins to predict what may happen in various circumstances. The adult immigrant is thrown into instability when introduced to a new culture and language.

The decision to immigrate brought on mixed feelings in the participants; they expressed a sense of being pushed and pulled, and an anxiousness about the future. With the new adventures there was a sense of uncertainty and a even a sense of desperation to improve the quality of life.

Quality of Life. We each seek to improve the quality of our own lives and are often challenged in the attempt. Our enjoyment of life can depend upon striking a balance between the right to improve, and maintaining stability.

Immigrants, like the rest of Canadians, seek enjoyment and fulfilment. In communist Poland, the participants expressed that life without opportunity, freedom and the promise of a future, was unbearable.

For the Polish immigrant, quality of life entails level of well-being for one's self and one's family. It includes joy and comfort and happiness. It is whatever satisfies and excites and fulfils goals and feeds interests and memories.

Figure 2. Included Terms in Cover Terms *Pushed and Pulled* and *Quality of Life*

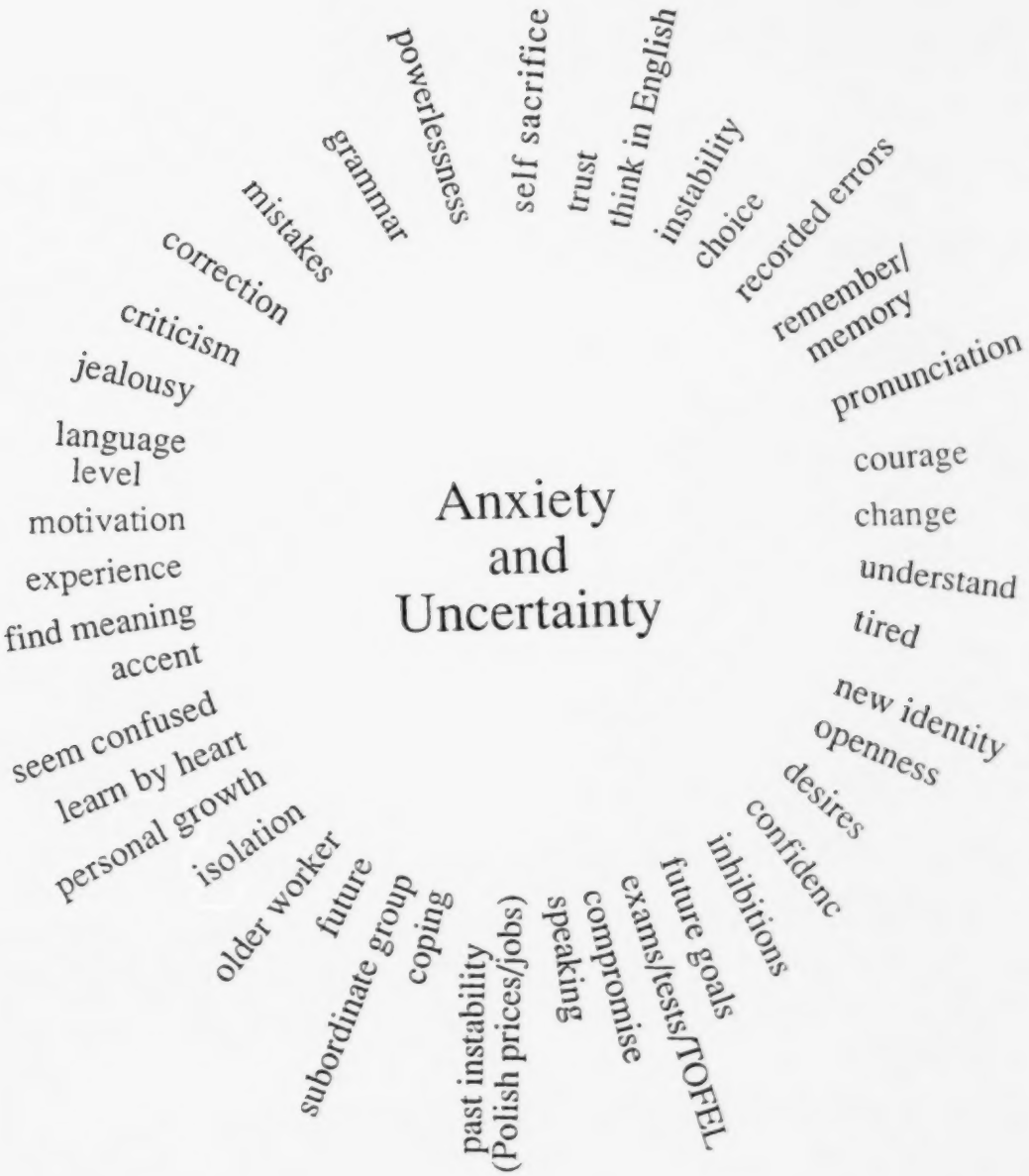

Figure 3. Included Terms in Cover Term *Anxiety and Uncertainty*

The participants felt that in Canada they should finally have the freedom to do things as they wanted to do them and not to suit others. After the crisis of emigration, the transit countries, and immigration, they also yearned for stability to enter their lives. They needed to grow in the directions their adult lives had led them. Peace and predictability meant even more to them now than it had before.

An example of a participant's statement that illustrates this is Kathy's, from the fourth interview: "We are glad that we are here. ... Canada gave us some kind of freedom and some possibilities to work. I think that the (rest) depends on ourselves."

She expressed this though during the noon hour, when there was time to eat and to visit, and to let some of the thoughts and ideas that are on the surface be heard: "I am quiet that my children are in a good place and that they don't waste their time. When I have good husband who loves me, children who loves me, who helps me in all these tasks at home, when I have some places which I love, all these things helps me to study English. I think that our choice (to come to Canada) is good."

Pushed and Pulled. When changes are tremendous and connections to the past are reduced to memories we can feel alone and lost. Who and what we are is linked to personal and cultural identity, but in the absence of familiarity there are new choices which must be made.

Like a tree pulled from the soil, the immigrant is vulnerable, relatively powerless and victimized. They expect to make choices and to endorse changes, but their heart and soul was left in their homeland where they were culturally shaped and educated.

Immigrants feel the pressure of change much more than do other members of society. They feel the need to make choices and the pull to identify new structures and duties. In Canada, the subordinate group must learn all there is to know about the dominant society.

Those who adapt most quickly will be the winners, according to Yvon. Using the experience of living in an absence of trust and loyalty, in unpredictability and chaos can, if one looks on the positive side, allow one to find out what he or she can accept and tolerate. Immigrant life drives home the idea that a Canadian identity calls for tolerance, flexibility and cooperation.

Much of their day during studying was directed by teachers. They had to do their homework. They looked forward to having more time to learn new vocabulary by reading the books **they** wanted to read. They had lost something through emigration and realized that they must find something new in Canada.

From across the study room table his fingers straighten out to a fan shape and he squints at me with intensity. "All newcomers have too much stress. Stress when they come to shopping, to go to the bank, to go to school. Everywhere is stress. We have a right to be tired. All time we are thinking about our future ... We waste time. Every day I am a little older." He looks down and he looks weary as he tells me how he must choose not only for himself but for his family and for the future of his children. "I can tell you," he says with a wry smile, "immigration is not recreation."

Anxiety/Uncertainty. In unfamiliar circumstances we must quickly find new ways to cope. When adults find themselves in situations of powerlessness they attempt to remedy the situation without delay because they see themselves working against time.

English as a second language learners, just as other second language learners, have many linguistic and cultural terms to acquire. They must learn much of the second language and culture "by heart" or memorization. There are many intricacies of the English language which must be learned before the feelings of confusion, isolation and inhibition are replaced with confidence, openness and the courage and motivation to learn more.

Immigrant ESL learners in particular experience much more anxiety and uncertainty due to linguistic and cultural factors. There are many sources for these feelings.

Immigrants may feel jealousy and envy of others who are able to spontaneously communicate their needs and interests in English. They may continue to be frustrated by their pronunciation and grammar because they realize that native speakers and teachers have often been too polite to correct them. During conversation they must rely on the example, criticism and correction of another to help them see how they can manipulate English for themselves. The native speaker often does not understand the depth of their need.

Yvon is adamant: "If the teacher doesn't correct all our spoken language we are listening and this is like the tape. These mistakes are recorded in our mind!" Jo-El explains, "We don't learn a lot (from) grammar rules. (We learn from being told) how we must say **our** questions correctly. Then we try to **think**. (Then we) say (it) again. It takes a lot of time to understand and when (the teacher tells us) how to say (it) correctly, it can help us easier, faster."

The Theme of Environmental Factors

Finding a role for oneself is the focus of our economic and social reality. This task is set for members of every society.

Young adults choose a career path based upon personal interests and societal needs. The adult immigrant must also discover what a "new citizen's role" might be. Within the restrictions and limitations of an immigrant identity, this probably means "re-designing" a career to adapt to the new environment.

The immigrant is automatically a member of a subordinate group and will experience many barriers in the search for a stable economic and social standing. Values philosophies may be reviewed and replaced as they come in contact with this redefined role.

The participants expressed themselves about such environmental factors, and the cover terms that incorporated their expression reflect (a) their expression of being in a subordinate group in Canadian society; and (b) the economic and social pressures they felt as immigrants. The cover term, "subordinate group" is shown with its included terms in Figure 4, while Figure 5 is a representation of the included terms under the cover term, "economic and social pressures."

Subordinate Group. A member of a subordinate group must learn more about the dominant society than vice versa. The second class citizen must play by the rules of the dominant group.

One of the most difficult aspects of immigrant life occurs during the process of adaptation. There is the assumption on the part of the dominant group that the second

language learner is second class. There is equally the expectation by the second language learner that they will have to take greater risks than others to "get ahead".

Immigrants encounter more barriers, limitations and restrictions and must interact with more tolerance and empathy than other groups. Because **they** are different, they are also open to rejection.

As with the student in the classroom, it is the immigrants' responsibility to adapt to the environment. The classroom is an extension of their role in society where limitations are set by the obligatory learning materials given by the instructor.

An example informant's statement is from the second interview with Peter: "I don't think it's pleasant... (being) obliged to learn. Maybe we can have some fun with it (English). (Doing) what we like to do is better."

Kathy was speaking freely during her eighth interview, sitting at the table and with her hands out-stretched in an intense movement as if picking up a heavy object to remove it, she said, "Immigrants have less chance than native speaker in getting some jobs...sometimes for reason of the language and ... also ... 'Canadian experience'. They desire this Canadian experience from all people. Even from newcomers. This is strange for me. How to get some experiences when I am here five months? But I know that many people offer really the worst jobs for new immigrants, really for the worst payment. For many of us this feeling is very bad when you aren't appreciate. ... When you feel that you can do this well or better even than someone and you can't do it because of some ... principles or something."

Economic/Social Pressures. Definitions of success vary from one level of society to another. The politics of barriers and needs are defined by one's present level of power and influence.

As in challenges for the aged or of youth, the immigrants' needs are dictated by what they do not have at any point in time. During crisis they feel victimized and powerless and are suspicious of leaders and institutions.

Entangled in the new citizen's role are added economic and social pressures of language education, family and values crises and the choice between isolation and cooperation and compromise. In living up to their expectations for Canadian material

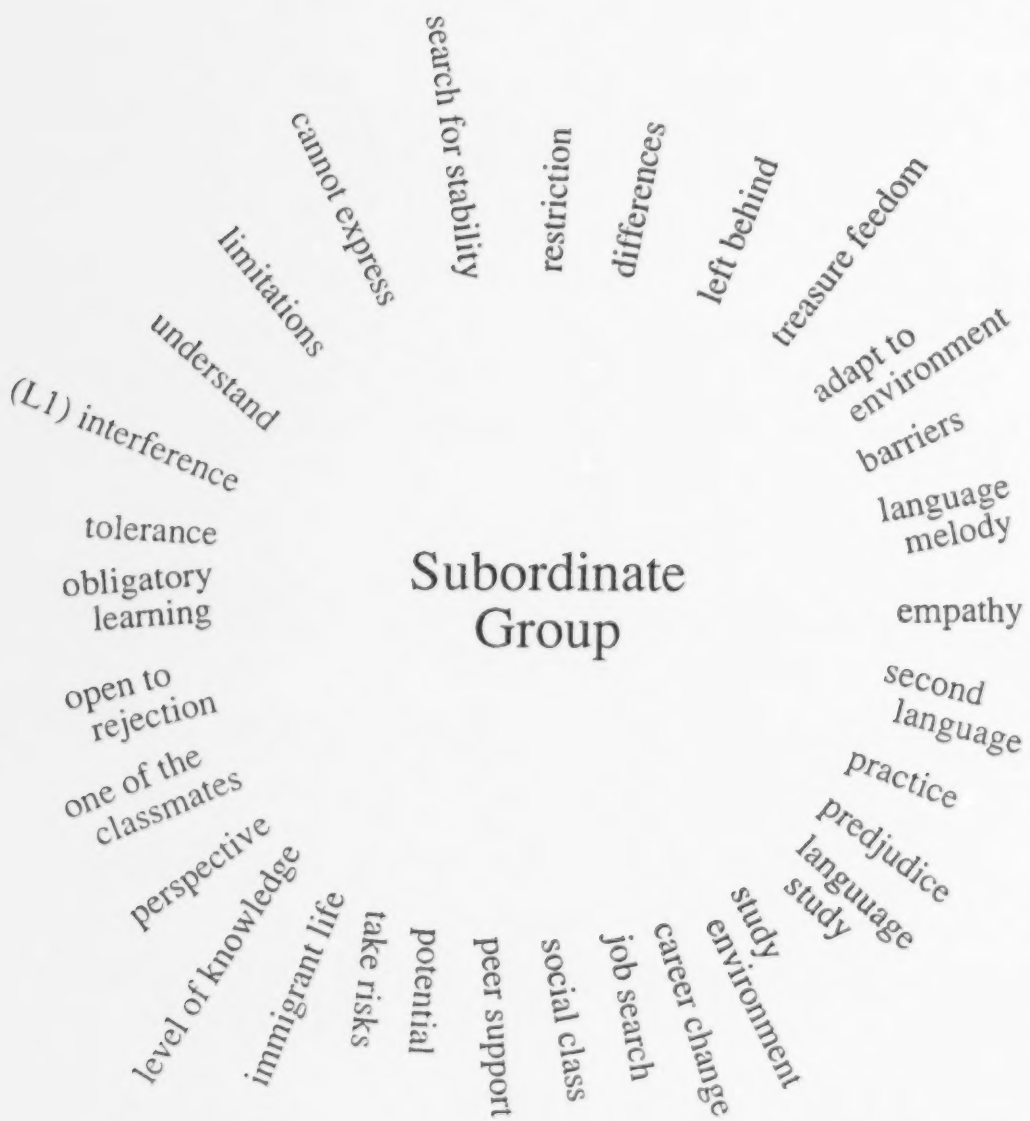

Figure 4. Included Terms in Cover Term *Subordinate Group*

Figure 5. Included Terms in Cover Term *Economic and Social Pressures*

wealth immigrants set themselves high standards for success.

An immigrant of relative youth may choose to focus upon training for language learning and job search skills. One who feels the weight of time against him or her may opt for on-the-job training in language and Canadian experience. In most cases professional language skills will be absent as the experience acquired often leads to further distancing from personal goals.

One of the most important decisions which can take place during the first months of the immigrant experience is how to identify their potential and how to invest their time. Individual concepts of relative age and relevant behaviour lead to a mind set and blend with personal goals and values to create that person's potential, or in other words, what they believe they can do with their lives in Canada at their age from this moment on.

In her fourth interview, Kathy said "My Polish background gives me forces to be here and to live here in Canada (because) I am rich with two thousand years of heritage. ... This English is one piece of very big and difficult mosaic. Our life. We have many different and various problems in our life here in Canada but it was our decision. We must get ahead and give all from us."

Summary

The analysis provided a grouping of specific included terms under three domains that dealt with mixed feelings ("pushed and pulled," "quality of life," and "anxiety and uncertainty"); and two domains that dealt with environmental factors ("subordinate group" and "economic and social pressures").

The included terms are the participants' words: the participants' words bring to light an image of their experience. The meanings they give for the terms they use represent their interpretation of reality.

Neither the emotions expressed nor the factors influencing those feelings have been hierarchically placed because each aspect of the ordeal of immigration has seemed to feed upon or contribute to another throughout the period of study. The

relationship between terms is one of complex cause and effect and cannot be depicted in isolation.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

> Studying in detail the life of anything . . . not only provide(s) . . . understanding of what it means to be something else, but also . . . permit(s) us a better understanding of ourselves in comparison. (Wurman, 1990, p. 160)

This study of immigrant second language learning focused upon interrelated emotional and concrete issues. Each cover term led into the next in an overall description of feelings and factors which became the essence of the experience.

Although the personal goals varied between participants, generalities drawn provide new perspectives on the ancient problem of human migration. The situation is new in that the factors and emotions described are placed in the modern context of a complex and often inflexible society. The questions raised from this research help to isolate directions and determine goals in contributing to the thoughtful and careful planning for futures in education.

Throughout this study I have been impressed by student frustration with programmes for learning English as a Second Language. I have felt their sense of urgency and panic and, toward the end, their resistance and despair. They could have benefited from outside recognition of the stress and growth they were experiencing. It was important that they be asked, "How is this experience affecting you?" and, "How is immigration and language learning changing your outlook on life?" and that this and other pertinent information be used in language learning.

After the interviews were complete and I had a chance to evaluate what had been said, I felt like it all must have been said before. Indeed, in doing the Literature Review, I found ample record of a call for communication with the learner. The present study only seemed to add to a growing body of criticism. I needed to answer the question of "how" to respond to the specific adult learner needs that these immmigrant second language learners represent. There had to be concrete, yet flexible ways

of educating adults. I was driven by a sense of participating in injustice and corroborating in procrastination if I did not now seek solutions and pose new questions in order to discover novel methods which speak to process in education.

The answers to programming lie with the adult students themselves. They have solutions. The problem now is to discover a method for including their input in the process of learning—from setting objectives, to programme implementation, through evaluation. Since language programmes continue over several months at a time, the method must have a built-in capacity for flexibility as a response to changing needs.

One method which answers these demands is described in *Profession Consultant* (1990) by Lescarbeau, Payette and St. Arneault. It refers to process in social psychology and can be adapted to educational settings and specific communities of learners. Branching out to other disciplines and opening up from the field of education is worth the risk in the search for solutions.

What is lacking is more information on the causes of problems. As the learner begins to have more to say in what he or she learns, details of potential problem areas need to be made available to committees on learning. In this way, problems could be better anticipated and effective learning could more easily take place.

A Message From the Learner

This study constitutes a message from four adult learners. I received some forceful messages from these interviews, and I hope to share them in this study. ESL learners must be listened to. Their anger and frustration and fear must be heard. The demoralizing loss of career and position must be understood. The counsellor, teacher, co-worker, boss, and community members must "know" the immigrant. There must be recognition and discussion of their situation so that they feel accepted and acknowledged for who they are.

True to the character of the adult learner, the immigrant will build the future he or she seeks. They are the best ones to solve their own problems and must be directed to and given all of the information they need.

If everyone had to go through an experience of immigration and language learning, the prejudices about immigrants would change. The participants to this study said that the best teachers were the ones who had travelled and who had needed to learn a second language as an adult.

Immigrants hope to be given the chance to live as equal participants in the Canadian society. To job search groups and trainers their potential is not immediately in sight.

Loss of being able to communicate on an adult level causes worry over peer acceptance and a sense of despair. The learner must have access to the teacher, or, as Yvon states, a teacher's detachment will crush the learner's courage to ask questions. Flexibility, growth and change must be part of the student-teacher role.

Implications for the Classroom

The learner is able to take the information on choices offered him or her and make a decision which is best for himself or herself. Choices about how and what learners acquire in language training must be made available to the student.

For some learners the "general learning" category may be useful. But the older and more specialized the language learner is in his or her professional field, the more choice must be offered.

Application

A mandate may already have been described in 1946 at the conference of the Canadian Association for Adult Education:

> The adult education movement is based on the belief that quite ordinary men and women have within themselves and their communities the spiritual and intellectual resources adequate to the solution of their problems (as quoted in Selman, 1983, p. 12).

Teachers must get to know what their learners value most. In a decision-making process for learning, the learner provides input from all the details pertinent to his or her job and interest history. Additional information would come from the results of

preliminary tests and from the teacher's review of educational research and past experience. The learner would then choose his or her preferred method for learning from among those presented.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Throughout the interview process, the participants emphasized that it was significantly more helpful to them to be corrected on the phrases they actually used themselves. It would be useful to study the level of student satisfaction in a classroom in which teacher resources were all or mostly derived from student oral and written work as compared to a classroom where the instruction is almost completely based upon a prescribed syllabus.
2. There are challenges to the immigrant adult second language learner which must be recognized if we are ever going to stop blaming the school, the government, or the teachers for the struggles of the second language learner. The domains identified in this study must become a more intricate part of immigrant adult ESL classroom work in so far as "what the learner has to cope with" is not ignored with a sympathetic sigh and a return to the syllabus, but that each student's stress must be addressed and their directions and personal choice of limitations be respected in learning a second language.

   A study could be done of what students identify as the most effective ways in which a learner can learn to take care of his or her own learning needs. It would be important to have learners place priority on techniques within the various phases of learning, with the goal of finding the most effective learning process (i.e., accounting for adult concerns of time management, career satisfaction, the need for peace and stability, etc.).
3. A parallel study needs to be done from the point of view of instructors who teach ESL to adult immigrants. Such a study would lead to a better understanding of what instructors have to deal with and may generate ideas of how instructors and students could best interact.

Taken in conjunction with the present study on the learner, a second study on the instructor would prevent one-sided interpretations and release instructors and students from taking their relationship for granted. An honest look at one's motivation for action promotes awareness and sparks creativity and change.

4. A collection of student-based learning techniques could be gathered and studied for effectiveness and/or manageability. For example, one of the main issues of this study has been the recognition of common language use of the four learners. The learners found that it was significantly more helpful to learn grammar through correcting the phrases they actually used. A number of interviews could be done for use in the classroom. The instructor could place an example interview on the overhead at the beginning of every class the following week. (The names of the students would be anonymous.)

   The correction to structure (articles, pronouns, meaning change, etc.) could be done with the assistance of all members of the group. Of course every day one would study the oral language of only one member of the group. But because, as was found in this study, the students hear each other speak and develop their second language in a similar fashion, the instructor would be addressing many of the groups' needs by addressing the needs of a single member. (Yvon, for example, says that learning from classmates' speech is like "recording errors".

5. Action research on methods such as were proposed in this study would provide a record of the process which is realized in admitting the equality of the individuals who are involved in a programme for learning. Honest and open communication of these experiences would assist others in the educational environment.

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